

# WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIANS THINK ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

In determining the questions we would address in this series of Quest, I threw out several topics you might like me to address, including today's question:  
What should Christians think about homosexuality?

Many of you responded you would be interested in talking about this issue. So, we're going to do so.

It may surprise you,  
but this is unusual for me.  
I've been an ordained pastor for 30 years, and  
I've spoken about this from the pulpit less than half a dozen times,  
less than 20 minutes in three decades.

And never has it been the subject of the sermon.  
I think never more than two or three paragraphs.  
Usually it has been a side issue to highlight  
another topic, such as how we are to interpret the Bible.

So this is not my issue;  
it's not the drum I'm always beating;  
just the opposite.

What we are looking at today is a subject that is controversial and emotional.  
And for some of you may be very personal.  
It's possible that you have a child or another loved one who identifies  
himself or herself as gay.  
It's possible that some of you have in the past or even now  
experience feelings of same gender attraction.

I want to be sensitive to that.  
I can laugh and make jokes regarding just about anything.  
Three exceptions.

I've never liked bathroom humor.  
The scene in Blazing Saddles around the campfire –  
hated it.  
You goobers thought it was the funniest thing you've ever seen.  
Hated it.

I don't laugh at racial humor  
or anything that even gets close.  
And I don't laugh at anything that in anyway  
demeans or stereotypes persons with same sex attraction.

It's not a laughing matter.  
It's painful for just about everyone involved  
and the last thing Christians should do  
is in any way participate in creating an atmosphere  
that adds to the pain that people feel  
and may even contribute to the violence they experience.

And of all places,  
we here in The Woodlands should be sensitive to that.  
As many of you will remember  
on July 4, 1991,  
ten youth from our community  
traveled to the Montrose area of Houston,  
found three gay men,  
two of whom escaped when the mal intent of their attackers became  
apparent.

One, however, Paul Broussard,  
a 27 year old banker and a Texas A&M alumnus,  
ran down a dead end street  
where he was surrounded beaten and stabbed by the ten youth,  
armed with steel-toed boots, nail-studded two-by-fours, and a knife.

For all kinds of reasons,  
primarily because Jesus commands me to love my neighbor,  
I won't treat this subject cavalierly.

It's about people,  
 people who are often hurting and vulnerable,  
 people who too frequently have been mistreated by the church,  
 and people who are made in the image of God.

There are so many issues related to this general topic,  
 that I have two choices.

Focus on one or two

and go into them in great depth.

Or deal with many of the sub-issues

and not give them all the detailed attention one could.

I've chosen to go the latter route,

because it will keep us moving and make for a more engaging lecture and  
 because I've given you several ways to go deeper in our conversation

by staying late on Sunday night,

communicating on our blog, or

joining me at breakfast on Wednesdays.

Some of you will want to know

## **1. What Does The United Methodist Church Teach About Homosexuality?**

All of the mainline churches either have or are presently struggling  
 with how to handle this divisive issue.

You might be interested to know that

the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Presbyterian

Church USA, and the Congregational Church of Christ,

all now ordain practicing homosexual pastors

and allow their pastors to marry gay couples.

The United Methodist Church is very divided on this issue.

It has come up and been voted on every four years at General Conference.

It will be a topic of great debate and contention again this April and May

when General Conference meets in Tampa, Florida.

Our official position is that The United Methodist Church

does not allow its pastors to marry gay couples;

We do not allow gay marriages or unions to be held on our property;  
and we don't allow self-avowed practicing homosexuals to serve as  
pastors.

We hold that all persons, regardless of sexual attraction,  
are persons of sacred worth and deserving of the ministry of the church.  
But we also state that the practice of homosexuality is "incompatible with  
Christian teaching."

The phrase "practice of homosexuality" is important.  
It puts the emphasis on behavior.  
We don't say that having a same-sex attraction is sinful,  
but that same-sex behavior is.

## **2. What Would I Say to a Homosexual?**

It's more important what the Bible says  
and we'll get there.

But I want to tell you what I would say,  
so you'll have the proper context to understand the rest of this lecture.

### **A. First, I would say God loves you and wants a relationship with you.**

I would say what's most important about you  
and what defines you and determines your identity  
is not your sexual desires  
but God's desire for you to be in a personal relationship with him.

Clip: Jimmy Swaggart.

If I stood before God and had to confess to:  
homosexual sex,  
being in a hotel room with a prostitute as brother Swaggart was, or  
saying what he just said –  
stating something that despicable and  
bringing out the worst in his congregation,  
I can tell you that what I would fear most would be having to report  
what you just saw on that clip.

**B. Second, I would say, we love you and you are welcome in this church just as you are.**

Being accepted here is not dependent on living a perfect life.  
 If it was, I would have been kicked out long ago.  
 I hope you will worship here,  
     come to Quest,  
 and grow closer to Christ  
     along with the other men of this church.

**C. Third, I would say, it's my job as a pastor and it's my calling as a Christian to love you and to tell you the truth.**

I can love you a long time before I tell you the truth,  
     but if I don't ever tell you the truth,  
     then I don't really love you.

Some people think that love is telling you that your sexual behavior doesn't matter or that your same gender attraction is a gift from God.  
 I think the way to love you  
     is accept you for who you are,  
     not judge you for your desires,  
     but let you know that God has something better for you.

I would also say that if you decide you want that something better,  
     it will be hard,  
 but we will love you,  
     support you, and  
     walk the journey with you.

And if you should ever stumble along the way,  
     I'll be glad to help you get up and get going again,  
 if you'll do the same for me when I fall.

Finally, at some point I'd have to tell you that same sex behavior is a sin.  
 But, you'll hear me talk much more about heterosexual lust and adultery,  
     because we have a lot more guys screwing up that way.

**D. I'd also tell an active homosexual, there's nothing all that special about your sin.**

Same-gender sexual behavior  
is not a special category of sin.

As we'll see in just a minute,  
it's lumped in there with all kinds of garden-variety sins that God wants  
us to turn from.

It's not any more effective in making us guilty before God  
than greed, gossip or lying.

**3. What Would I say to Christians – the Church?**

**A. Your most important task is to love your neighbor and the homosexual person is your neighbor.**

Jesus gave us two great commands.

1. Love God with all you are.
2. Love your neighbor as yourself.

And if you can't love the homosexual,  
then keep your stinking mouth shut.

We don't need you  
misrepresenting God,  
embarrassing the Church, or  
doing damage to persons that Jesus died for.

**B. Heterosexual sin has done and is doing much greater harm to the church, to families and to the cause of Christ than homosexual sin will ever do.**

Our focus should be on our own sexual purity and marital faithfulness  
more than on homosexual acts.

**C. Homosexual sin is not the worst of all the sins – not by a long shot.**

**1 Corinthians 6.9-10:** Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor

thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

In this list of those who will not inherit the Kingdom right next to those who engage in homosexual behaviors are people who are greedy and who slander others.

Some sins may do more damage than others.  
Murder, child abuse, adultery come to mind.

But none makes us more guilty.  
Homosexual acts do not make someone more guilty before God than does greed or pride or gluttony.

**D. We must not let our culture convince us that what the Bible has revealed is outmoded or untrue.**

To pick up the language of last week,  
we must be both gracers and truthers.  
And it's possible to do both.  
Hold to what the Bible says and  
reject what an overly-sexualized culture tells us about sexual behavior,  
and at the same time love and accept people.

We can do both and we must do both.

**Question Four.**

**4. What does the Bible Say about Homosexual Practice?**

Not a lot, but its message is consistent.

Not a lot and for that I say, "Thank God."  
Who would want to pick up their holy book  
and on every other page there are all kinds of sexual practices detailed  
and either condemned or commended.

Depending on how you interpret them,  
there are a total of nine passages that deal with homosexual behavior.

The ones that I feel most comfortable pointing to are these five.

**Leviticus 18.22:** Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.

**Leviticus 20.13:** If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable.

**Romans 1.26-27:** Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

**1 Corinthians 6.9-11:** Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

**1 Timothy 1.9-11:** We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and for those who practice homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God ...

So, as I said, homosexual practice is not mentioned many times, but the message of the Bible is consistent.

In none of these passages is there a single word that promotes, condones or even accepts homosexual practice.

In fact, every passage tells us that homosexual acts are not God's will for us and are sinful.

And important to note,  
these passages are from the Old and New Testaments  
and were written both for a Hebraic culture

and a Graeco-Roman culture.

And to be faithful to the biblical message,  
we should say that there is a positive message about sex in the Scriptures  
that sets the proper context for the passages we just read.

God created sex.  
He called it good.  
And he created it heterosexual.

### **5. If the Bible is so Clear, Why do some Christians Believe that Homosexual Practice is Not Wrong and that being Gay is a Gift From God?**

Of course, this is not my view, so I may not be fair to this side of the  
argument.  
But it's my intention to be as fair as I can be.

#### **A. They believe these passages do not address what we label as “homosexuality” today.**

The passages in Leviticus,  
they say refer to temple prostitution which was common in the tribes  
that surrounded Israel.

The passages in the New Testament either refer to temple prostitution or  
to the practice of an older man using a younger boy as an object of sexual  
satisfaction.

For the sake of time, we can't refute these interpretations,  
but I believe the best scholarship and the passages read in context  
will make it evident to you,  
that these passages mean exactly what they seem to mean.

For an in-depth look at these passages,  
pick up the book I mention on your student notes: Straight and Narrow?

#### **B. They believe that the Bible cannot always be trusted to give us moral or spiritual truth.**

There are different ways to approach the Bible.

One believes that it is the inspired word of God.  
And that what it teaches is what God has revealed.

God has revealed more of himself over time,  
but what he has told us about himself is consistent.

Another view believes that the Bible gives us the best that men and women  
knew about God at the time, but we now know more.  
And where our reason or our experiences or science tells us something  
different than what the Bible teaches,  
we can adopt these new beliefs.

This view might even say,  
the Holy Spirit reveals new truths about God  
and his will for us.

Those of us who hold to a high view of the inspiration and authority of the  
Bible would say that the Holy Spirit continues to reveal truth about God  
but it will always be consistent with what he has revealed in the past.

God hasn't changed.  
Human nature hasn't changed.  
So his message hasn't changed.

A good description of the liberal, or as they prefer to be called now  
“progressive,” viewpoint  
is described in this piece written by a United Methodist pastor in California.

**Tom Griffith:** Now it is our turn to get honest. Although the creeds of our denomination pay lip service to the idea that Scripture is “authoritative” and “sufficient for faith and practice,” many of us have moved far beyond that notion in our own theological thinking. We are only deceiving ourselves – and lying to our evangelical brothers and sisters – when we deny the shift we have made. . . . We have moved far beyond the idea that the Bible is exclusively normative and literally authoritative for our faith. To my way of thinking that is good. What is bad is that we have tried to con ourselves and others by saying, “We haven't changed our position.”

Or as one United Methodist pastor here in Texas who had served one of our most prestigious churches in the Rice area told me: Rob, the church created the Scriptures, so we can re-create the Scriptures.  
People who hold this view believe that the authors of the books of the Bible

were so conditioned by the time and the culture they lived in that their words are bound by that time and culture and as knowledge progresses beyond what their culture knew, our theological beliefs should progress beyond what they wrote.

What do we know about homosexuality that the people of say Paul's day didn't know?  
That people are born homosexual.  
That it's their nature.

We'll look into that in just a moment.

But I'd like to close this section with the words of author

**Paul Morris:** If I were a Christian homosexual, I think this one question would disturb me most: Am I trying to interpret Scripture in the light of my proclivity; or should I interpret my proclivity in light of Scripture?

### **C. They believe that we should accept everyone the way Jesus did.**

When I have spoken with persons who see this issue differently, they almost all talk about how Jesus accepted everyone, especially those who were looked down upon and condemned as sinners.

This past week I received a lengthy and thoughtful email taking me to task for the work I do with Good News. It was written by a man who worships here.

In referring to an editorial I wrote which stated that homosexuals are welcome in our churches but we need to live by our commitment not to marry gays, he wrote:  
"Would Jesus greet members of one of the most marginalized groups in our society this way? I think he would go out of his way to welcome them?"

His comments pick up on the idea that Jesus loved and welcomed all people. So, shouldn't we?  
The answer is, of course, we should.

Unfortunately the people who make this argument

usually don't ever give the full picture of Jesus.

He not only accepted people,  
 he also told them,  
 the self-righteous and the powerful,  
 as well as the mistreated and the marginalized,  
 "Go and sin no more."

One of the amazing abilities of Jesus was to balance grace and truth so well.  
 He could tell people to repent of their sins  
 and they heard it not as condemnation but as an invitation to live a better  
 life – a life that was more whole,  
 more healthy, and  
 more pleasing to God.

Part of what I wrote back was: All people are made in God's image. But not all actions please God. I appreciate your concern for people and their feelings and their need for a relationship with God. I think I share those same concerns. We simply see helping homosexual persons in a different way. You believe the best way is to love them and tell them that their actions are fine. I believe the best way is to love them and tell them that God has a better way for them.

#### **D. They stress that Jesus did not condemn homosexual behavior.**

It's true he didn't.

He did quote the Genesis passage that God created human beings male and female, stating his belief that this was God's original intention for human sexuality.

And just as importantly,  
 Jesus did not condemn prostitution, incest, or bestiality.  
 All practices condemned in the Old Testament.

Would anyone make a case that Jesus supported those practices?

No, of course, not.

If Jesus wanted to change the sexual ethic of the Old Testament,  
 he would have done so directly and verbally,  
 not by remaining silent about it.

Next question.

## 6. Why This Sin?

I'm asked this often.

Why are you so concerned about this sin and not others?

Well, as I've said, I don't think this sin is particularly egregious.

And I certainly don't feel anything towards gay persons that I don't feel towards persons in general.

In other words, I don't find gays or what they do especially abhorrent.

Two reasons why this sin.

### **A. This is the only sin that the church is being asked to accept, affirm and celebrate.**

Clip: Oprah

The only reason we talk about it  
and the only reason I write about it  
is because large numbers of people are trying to change the church's view  
about it.

We know more people are greedy than homosexual  
and we know Jesus and the New Testament authors wrote more about  
greed than homosexuality.

But no one is asking the church to say greed is good,  
that it is a gift from God, and  
we should change what the Bible says about it  
and encourage those with a greedy nature  
to fulfill their desire for more and more stuff.

The common objection and it's a good one is why don't you harp on  
divorce?

No one is asking us to teach that divorce is wonderful.

And no one says, I know that the Bible says divorce is wrong,  
but by golly, I refuse to change.

I'm going to get married and divorced over and over

because I can and because I like it.

People think of divorce as a most regrettable act  
and they hope never to go through it again.

Why this sin?

Because it's the only sin the church is being asked to call good when the  
Bible says it's not.

That leads to another reason.

### **B. The authority of the Bible is at stake.**

In my mind the teachings of the Bible on the practice of homosexuality is  
clear.

It's no worse than any other sin,  
but it is sin.

And once we say it's not,

we have decided that the Bible cannot be trusted.

And once we decide the Bible cannot be trusted where it disagrees with what  
we want it to say,  
we don't have Christianity anymore,  
we have us-ianity.

Once we let the culture change what we believe about the Scriptures  
instead of attempting to change the culture by the revelations of God,  
we offer the world culturanity, not Christianity.

### **C. The healing ministry of the church is at stake.**

All of us are broken.

Emotionally and sexually.

And homosexuality is one form of sexual brokenness.

I'll talk about causes in just a moment.

But very often abuse, seduction at an early age, gender disturbance, and  
dysfunctional family dynamics play a part in a person's coming to  
identify himself as gay.

If that's the case,

the most unkind, unloving thing we can do  
is to tell a person that his brokenness is a gift from God  
and not offer the hope of emotional and sexual wholeness.

The church is called to be a healing community.  
And if we fail to offer healing  
because our messed up culture wants us to call brokenness wholeness and  
freedom,  
we fail God and we fail homosexuals.

## **7. Are People Born Gay?**

This is a popular notion  
and you'll hear it stated as fact.

Again from the email I received.

“There is enormous evidence in the scientific community today that many  
individuals are born homosexual; it is their very nature.”

People who make those claims have rarely researched the data.  
But that doesn't keep them from stating it as the absolute truth.

Listen, this is too important to simply repeat what you have heard others say  
because it would seem to justify your beliefs.

Bottom line,  
human behavior is much too complicated to be determined by a gene or  
even many genes.

Sexual identity and preference is not like eye color.  
It created by an extremely complex interaction of biological and  
environmental factors.

Environmental factors such as  
one's relationships with one's parents,  
one's relationships with one's peers,  
one's role models,  
the culture you grow up in and it's teachings,  
the sexual stimuli you experience especially when you are young,  
including whether or not some one of the same gender

initiates sexual activity with you, etc.

If it was a gene,  
 and by the way, no reputable biologist claims that it is,  
 there would have to be a gay gene,  
 a hetero gene,  
 a bi-sexual gene,  
 an animal gene that would explain why some persons engage  
 in bestiality, etc.

And I am in no way equating homosexuality with bestiality  
 other than pointing out how foolish it is to believe  
 that our sexual desires are predetermined by our biology.

Interestingly,  
 some in the gay community no longer want to find a biological cause.  
 If it is,  
 it may be possible to abort a fetus with that trait  
 or through genetic engineering replace the “gay gene or genes” with  
 straight genes.

Do I believe that being gay is a choice?

Not for the vast majority, though some gays will tell you it is.

Here’s a recent quote from Cynthia Nixon who starred on Sex and the City.

**Cynthia Nixon:** I gave a speech recently, an empowerment speech to a gay audience, and it included the line ‘I’ve been straight and I’ve been gay, and gay is better.’ And they tried to get me to change it, because they said it implies that homosexuality can be a choice. And for me, it is a choice. I understand that for many people it’s not, but for me it’s a choice, and you don’t get to define my gayness for me.”

Nixon is in the minority but she is not alone  
 in saying she chose to be gay.

I assume you know at least by name the magazine Mother Jones  
 and you are aware it’s not a conservative journal.  
 In a wonderfully balanced, lengthy article titled: Gay by Choice? The  
 Science of Sexual Identity,  
 the most recent research on causes of sexual identity is discussed.

They discuss the work of Psychology Professor Lisa Diamond whose studies indicate that sexual identity is much more fluid than people imagine.

Women, more so than men,  
may move back and forth from gay to straight to bi to gay to straight.

Here's a quote:

**Mother Jones:** Psychology professor Lisa Diamond may have the best reason of all for activists to shy away from arguing that homosexuality is inborn and immutable: It's not exactly true. She doesn't dispute the findings that show a biological role in sexual orientation, but she thinks far too much is made of them. "The notion that if something is biological, it is fixed – no biologist on the planet would make that sort of assumption" ...

Reading about the research,  
including the studies that have been used to "prove" that persons are born gay – including what's referred to as the twin studies, the study of the hypothalamus in gays and straights, and the study of the Xq28 section of the chromosome – will prove fascinating for you.

And you'll learn that the studies that supposedly prove that you are born with your sexual orientation were all flawed or used too small a sample to be trustworthy.

And they have not been replicated by other scientists.

This could get very detailed.

I've given you some links to articles you might find worthwhile.

But here's where I believe the research is.

It's quoted from an article by Dr. Douglas A. Abbot, professor of Child, Youth and Family Studies at the University of Nebraska.

**Douglas Abbot:** Even advocates for a genetic explanation of homosexuality such as Szuchman (2002), concluded that the scientific evidence for a biological cause of homosexual behavior is "remarkably flawed, such that no unbiased view for or against many of these factors [i.e., biogenetic causes] is possible... We still have no good evidence of biological

influences on sexual preference or sexual orientation” (p. 212). Gay advocates Parker and DeCecco (1995) conceded that “research into possible biological bases of sexual preference has failed to produce any conclusive evidence” (p. 427).

This same conclusion is reported in the Mother Jones article.

“While scientists have found intriguing biological differences between gay and straight people, the evidence so far stops well short of proving we are born with a sexual orientation that we will have for life. Even more important, some research shows that sexual orientation is more fluid than we have come to think, that people, especially women, can and do move across customary sexual orientation boundaries, that there are ex-straight as well as ex-gays.”

Is a person’s being gay already determined at birth?

No research says that it is.

In fact, responsible biologists say almost no human behavior is determined at the time of birth.

If being gay is a choice for only the smallest number,  
and if it’s not hard-wired and predetermined,  
then how do people end up that way?

Well to be fair,  
there may be some biological predisposition.  
But not predetermination.

And then other factors play a role.  
I’ve mentioned some already –

one’s relationships with one’s parents,  
one’s relationships with one’s peers,  
one’s role models,  
the culture you grow up in and its teachings,  
the sexual stimuli you experience especially when you are young,  
including whether or not some one of the same gender  
initiates sexual activity with you, etc.

I’ve known men who have engaged in homosexual behavior and have had

homosexual desires who later came to believe those feelings were the result of their experiences with older boys when they were young and innocent or with boys their own age.

Read the Mother Jones article I mentioned  
and you'll read the story of a man who describes his homosexual  
desires and sexual activity as a thirst for the love he had not received  
from his father and a fear of women because of the mother he had.  
Desperate for male attention,  
he found himself ultimately self-identifying and living as a homosexual.

Interestingly,  
this man no longer lives as a homosexual and finds women physically  
attractive and desirable.

Therapy helped him.  
Not the stereotypical repressed southern Christian who felt guilty  
about denying his Bible Belt morality.  
He's an older man,  
a nonobservant Jew,  
a lifelong Democrat who volunteered for George McGovern  
and who thinks George Bush is a war criminal.

Finally, he didn't want to be gay,  
and he got some help.

## **8. Can Homosexuals Change?**

The answer is some do.  
It's not easy  
and it's not the result of just deciding you won't be gay anymore.  
And 999,999 times out of a million,  
it's not the result of a single prayer: God, please change me.  
Not saying it couldn't be,  
but usually it's the work of a caring therapist  
who helps a man learn that he can give and receive male affection  
without it being sexual in nature.

Some persons who go through such treatment change their desires

from homosexual to heterosexual.  
 Some do not.  
 And some are in between,  
 having fewer desires for the same sex  
 and more for the other sex.

“Can homosexuals change?” is an important question but not the most important question.

### **9. Can Persons Live Sexually Pure Lives in Spite of Their Desires – and is it Right to Ask People to Do So?**

Again from the email I received this week.

“You cannot tell a homosexual that they have sacred worth on one hand, and on the other hand tell them that acting on their God-given nature is wrong. Homosexuals cannot be expected to abstain from their very nature and at the same time be sexually whole.”

Ok, first, by now you know that I don’t think homosexual desires are God-given.  
 And I’ve been very careful not to use the terms “nature” or “orientation.”

What persons have are sexual desires.  
 What we don’t have is a hard-wired biologically determined nature.

But I’m more interested in the last part of that paragraph.  
 “Homosexuals cannot be expected to abstain from their very nature and at the same time be sexually whole.”

First, do you think that sexual wholeness  
 requires having to be sexually active?

That is such a 21<sup>st</sup> century decadent, materialist Western way of thinking.

Jesus was not sexually active.  
 Was he less than whole?

Paul.

Francis of Assisi.  
 Later in life Gandhi.  
 Mother Teresa.

All less than whole?

What does sexual wholeness mean?  
 Having sex a certain amount of times  
     every week,  
     every month,  
     as often as you want it?

What about single Christians who decide to remain chaste until marriage?  
 Are they not sexually whole?

What about those who remain chaste after a divorce or the death of a  
 spouse?

They all continue to have a sexual nature –  
 if they are not acting on that nature,  
 does that make them less than whole persons?

I suggest that a sex life that honors God  
 is what determines whether or not we are sexually whole,  
 not how often we engage in sexual intercourse.

But, if you make me, I'll answer it,  
 "Yes, we can ask people not to give into their nature  
 in order to honor Christ."

As a matter of fact,  
 that's a big portion of what the Christian life is:  
 overcoming our natural desires  
 that put self first instead of God.

I don't stand up here anywhere near perfect.  
 I'm here saying sexual purity is hard.  
 And imagining a life without sex  
     would be no fun at all.  
 Although, it's becoming easier to imagine all the time.

But, Jesus calls us to sexual purity.  
And those of us who are unmarried,  
I have to tell you gay or straight,  
God's will for you is celibacy until you are married.  
And sexual activity outside of marriage is sin.

I know that's hard.  
But it's God's call on our lives.

And Jesus said

**Jesus:** Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (Mark 8.34)

Crucifying our old nature is part of following Jesus.  
And if I don't preach that I fail you.

If I tell you that it's easy,  
I'll set you up for failure because it's not.

But we are called to live pure lives.  
And with God's help,  
with an environment that is accepting and honest,  
and with the help of our brothers,  
we can become more the men God wants us to be.

**Resources for further study on student notes.**